

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DHHS, Area Agencies on Aging Observe World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Lincoln – A statewide effort to inform Nebraskans how to help elderly and vulnerable adults who are abused, neglected or financially exploited will be part of the Department of Health and Human Services' eighth annual observance of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 14.

The observance is a collaborative effort of Adult Protective Services in the Children and Family Services Division and State Unit on Aging in the Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division. Its purpose is to raise awareness in the state of various types of abuse that older Nebraskans experience.

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse for 2010, the most recent information available, more than 9 percent of the elderly in the U.S. are abused. The median age of the elderly who are abused is nearly 78 years of age, and two-thirds are female. More than half the victims experienced neglect, 15 percent were physically abused, and 12 percent were financially exploited.

Citizens are encouraged to learn and watch for warning signs of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of elderly and vulnerable adults and speak up for their protection, said Thomas Pristow, director of Children and Family Services. Warning signs include:

- Sudden changes in behavior or finances.
- Physical injuries, dehydration, or malnourishment.
- Extreme withdrawal, depression, or anxiety.
- Absence of basic care or necessities.
- Kept away from others
- Unsanitary living conditions.
- Personal items missing.

Public awareness materials have been distributed by Adult Protective Services, domestic violence programs and local area agencies on aging. In addition, posters, public service announcements, community presentations and other activities will be held in Nebraska communities.

"Evidence of these signs should prompt a call to our 24-hour, toll-free Adult and Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-652-1999," Pristow said. "We must speak up for elderly and vulnerable adults because they can't or may not do it themselves."

He said calls are anonymous.

"Victims are often afraid to speak out because the abuser is a family member or caregiver on whom they depend," said Vivianne Chaumont, director of Medicaid and Long-Term Care. "Abused elderly and vulnerable adults live in fear of retribution, lack of care, embarrassment and losing their place of residence."

"The observance of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is a reminder that abuse and neglect of older persons can happen anywhere," Pristow said. "DHHS provides resources to help those who need protection."

Local offices on aging and their locations are: Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging, Omaha; Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, Beatrice; Aging Partners, Lincoln; Midland Area Agency on Aging, Hastings; South Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging, Kearney; West Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging, North Platte; Aging Office of Western Nebraska, Scottsbluff; and Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging, Norfolk.

To learn more, visit the National Center on Elder Abuse website at www.ncea.aoa.gov, or the Adult Protective Services website at <http://1.usa.gov/12nmP3V>.